

3. *H. barbozæ*, Hartl. l. c. p. 329.

Hab. Benguela.

4. *H. nehrkorni*, Hartl.

Hab. Accra, Gold Coast.

5. *H. australis*, Shell.; Hartl. l. c. p. 331.

Hab. Umvuli River, S.E. Africa.

As regards this species, of which I have not yet examined specimens, and which is, as yet, known from a single example only, I may remark that it is apparently a less typical form.

The type specimen of our new species, *Hyliota nehrkorni*, from which the figure is taken, is in the splendid collection of Amts Rath Nehrkorn, of Riddagshausen, near Brunswick.

XXXI.—*Remarks on Lanius excubitor and its Allies.*

By H. E. DRESSER, F.L.S., F.Z.S.

AFTER an examination of the large series of Great Grey Shrikes in the British Museum and in the collection of Mr. Seebohm, as well as of twenty-one skins in my own collection, I quite agree with the late E. von Homeyer and Professor R. Collett that there is but one species of Great Grey Shrike in Europe, that the true *Lanius major* of Pallas does not occur here, and that the European specimens recorded as belonging to that species are merely individual varieties of *Lanius excubitor*. This view was also held by the late Dr. Taczanowski, who writes (Faun. Orn. Sib. Orient. p. 489):—"It appears to us that most of these birds found accidentally in Europe are but varieties of *Lanius excubitor* having the alar patch less developed, that is to say single."

Professor Bogdanoff separates these varieties from the Siberian form and refers them to a subspecies which he calls *Lanius borealis europæus*. But there is no doubt that this so-called subspecies occurs in the same localities where *Lanius excubitor* is found and freely interbreeds with that species, and that every gradation between the two forms is

to be met with, which, it appears to me, precludes its being treated as even a constant form or subspecies. The single bar on the wing and the vermiculations on the underparts are the characters claimed as distinguishing this form, but neither of these is constant. Von Homeyer, after a careful examination of sixty-three specimens, emphatically denies that the single and double bars are distinctive characters, and says (J. f. O. 1880, p. 151) "die Spiegel-Theorie ganz unhaltbar ist." In my own collection I find one adult bird with the underparts unbarred and with one alar bar, the second bar being just perceptible; a second specimen, an old female, with only one bar on the wing and with faint vermiculations on the breast; a third and fourth, male and female, with one alar bar, the underparts being strongly barred or vermiculated; a fifth and sixth, evidently old birds, with the double alar bar very strongly developed, but with the underparts clearly vermiculated, all six being specimens obtained in Europe.

I am indebted to Professor R. Collett for the loan of three specimens obtained in Norway. The first of these, an adult female obtained at Lister on the 18th April, 1890, has the underparts unbarred, and but one alar bar, there being no trace of a second bar. The second, an adult male obtained at Vest Aker on the 18th April, 1886, has also the underparts unbarred and one alar bar, but there is also a small second alar bar, which is, however, concealed by the wing-coverts. The third, a female bird of the year, obtained also at Vest Aker on the 24th September, 1886, has the underparts clearly vermiculated with pale dark transverse lines, and has one alar bar and a second bar also concealed by the wing-coverts. All three specimens have the rump and upper tail-coverts grey, like the back, and in tone of colour agree closely with typical *Lanius excubitor*, having no trace of brown in the plumage.

Professor Bogdanoff, in his excellent monograph of the Shrikes ('Sorokoputui Russkoi Faunui,' p. 109), remarks that "the absence of the second alar patch cannot be considered a specific character of *L. major*," and points out that in

Siberian specimens there is occasionally a small second bar. As regards the interbreeding of the two forms in Europe, Meves (Arch. f. Math. og Naturv. 1879, p. 279) has recorded the fact that he obtained two young birds, both supposed to belong to the same brood, shot at Quickjock in Lapland on the 12th August, one of which, a male, had a double alar bar and the other, a female, a single bar; and Professor Collett, in his excellent article on *Lanius excubitor* and *Lanius major* ('Ibis,' 1886, pp. 30-40), states that he shot three young birds out of the same brood near Hjerkin on the Dovre Fjeld, two of which, males, had the double bar, and the third, a female, a single alar bar. He also in two instances shot in Norway paired birds, the males of which had the double bar, and the females a single bar. From these facts it is clear that *Lanius excubitor* is subject to considerable individual variation, and it would appear that the single alar bar is more frequently found in the female than in the male.

As regards *Lanius homeyeri*, it appears to me, to say the least, to be a very bad species, and merely an intermediate form between *Lanius excubitor* and *Lanius leucopterus*. Indeed, in a large series intermediate links between it and both *L. excubitor* and *L. leucopterus* can be found. It appears that *Lanius excubitor*, like *L. elegans*, is subject to extreme variation in the amount of white in the plumage, but in the former species the white in the plumage seems to increase the further east one goes until it culminates in *Lanius leucopterus*. I have in my own collection specimens from Stockholm, North Russia, and the Ural showing a perfect gradation from typical *L. excubitor* to extreme *L. homeyeri*. Professor Collett (*l. c.*) records a specimen from Norway intermediate between *L. excubitor* and *L. homeyeri*, approximately closer to the latter than the former, and von Homeyer (*l. s. c.*) states that he has received specimens of so-called *L. homeyeri* from the lower Volga which cannot be specifically separated from *L. excubitor*. It appears to me that *Lanius leucopterus* can fairly be considered as a distinct form, but that *L. homeyeri* is merely a connecting link between that species and *L. excubitor*, and has no constant distinc-

tions by which it can be separated from the latter, from which it differs merely in having more white in the plumage.

Lanius leucopterus (*L. przewalskii*, Bogd.) is a very white form of *Lanius excubitor* having the two alar bars very large and confluent. Its forehead and a broad superciliary stripe are also pure white, as are the lower rump and upper tail-coverts, and the three outer tail-feathers are almost entirely white; in some of the secondaries the inner web is pure white, this being the only constant character I can find to distinguish this species. *Lanius leucopterus* inhabits, so far as I can ascertain, the southern portion of Central Siberia and Turkestan.

Throughout Northern Siberia *Lanius excubitor* is replaced by *Lanius major*, Pall. This form, when we wrote our article on the Grey Shrikes in 1870 (*P. Z. S.* 1870, p. 592), Dr. Bowdler Sharpe and I suggested would ultimately prove to be conspecific with *Lanius borealis*, and now, after a comparison of the series in the British Museum and my own collection, I cannot find any character by which the birds from Siberia and North America can be separated. Both species are as a rule tinged with tawny brown, but some, though comparatively few, specimens are nearly as grey as *Lanius excubitor*.

As a rule the American birds are more frequently tinged with brown than those from Siberia, but there are in the British Museum specimens from America quite as grey as any of those from Siberia. This species has the underparts distinctly barred with narrow transverse vermiculations, and has but one alar bar, though in one specimen from the Baikal district in my own collection there is a slight indication of a second alar bar on one wing. Prof. Bogdanoff also remarks (*l. s. c.*) that some Siberian specimens have a second alar bar, whereas others have but a single bar, but that in all Siberian birds which have the second bar it is smaller than in European examples and is almost hidden by the larger coverts. He further adds that the colour of the rump and the amount of white on the tail are extremely variable, that in only one specimen examined was the outer rectrix entirely white, and that the only characters by which the

Siberian form can be distinguished are the brownish tinge of colour in the plumage, the constant vermiculation of the underparts, and the general absence of the second alar bar.

There is, however, one specimen of a Grey Shrike from the island of Askold, near Vladivostock, in the collection of Mr. Seebohm, which is extremely puzzling. This bird has no trace of vermiculations on the underparts, nor any trace of brown in the plumage, but it has a single alar bar and has the rump and upper tail-coverts pure white. This specimen was received by Mr. Seebohm from Dr. Taczanowski, and the latter gentleman evidently considered this form to be the fully adult of *Lanius major*, Pall., as he writes (*op. cit.* p. 489) :—"The adult of this Eastern Shrike (*L. major*) does not differ from the adult of *L. excubitor* except in the larger amount of white on the forehead, and in having the upper tail-coverts and the lower rump pure white, or at most with a grey tinge on the tip of the tail-coverts, whereas the European form has the entire upper surface uniform light grey, paling indistinctly in colour on the lower back. Moreover the alar bar is restricted to the primaries, the secondaries having only white on the base of the outer web of the feathers next to the primaries, the succeeding secondaries having no white on them, and the secondaries in general are blacker. The difference between the young and immature birds of the two forms is at the first glance much more striking." I cannot, however, agree that this is the adult of *L. major*, as in all the large series I have examined this is the only specimen I have met with lacking the vermiculations on the underparts and all trace of the brown tinge in the plumage. Besides, Professor Bogdanoff, who has probably examined more specimens of Siberian Shrikes than any other ornithologist, does not even mention this form. I may add that Professor Bogdanoff, like Dr. Sharpe and myself, notices the close similarity between specimens from Siberia and North America, but states that, compared with American examples, the Siberian form is purer in colour, and that the female of the American form is much browner than in the Siberian, as are also the young.

He concludes by saying that "there are no sharp characteristics to enable one to discriminate the two forms with certainty, and therefore it is more correct to consider *Lanius major* and *Lanius borealis* as local races of the same species, the specific characters of which are not yet developed," and he therefore called the Siberian form *Lanius borealis sibiricus*. In this view I fully concur with the Professor, but I do not consider the differences sufficient to permit one to accord the Siberian form even subspecific rank, and I therefore refer it to *Lanius borealis*, Vieill.

Another Asiatic Shrike allied to *Lanius borealis* is *Lanius mollis*, Eversmann, which inhabits the Altai range and Turkestan, and has been recorded by Mr. Seeböhm from Archangel. This species differs from *L. borealis* in having the upper and under tail-coverts sandy buff, and is even browner in tinge of colour than tawny American specimens of that form. I have seen only two specimens of this Shrike, both of which are in the collection of Mr. Seeböhm, and I cannot therefore give a decided opinion from personal examination as to the validity of this species; but Professor Bogdanoff, who has had the best opportunity of judging, describes the adult male, female, and the nestling, and states (*l. s. c.*) that he has no doubt as to its being a perfectly good species differing in all plumages from its allies. So far as I can judge from the two specimens I have examined, I am decidedly inclined to endorse this opinion.

There are two more species of Grey Shrike which have been described as inhabiting the Eastern Palearctic region, viz. *Lanius sphenocercus* and *Lanius seebohmi*. The former of these is easily recognizable by its somewhat larger size and very long graduated tail. It is otherwise like *L. excubitor*, but has the two bars on the wing large and confluent as in *Lanius leucopterus*, and the underparts are white with a rosy tinge.

Lanius seebohmi, of which only the type is known, is a doubtful species, and until more specimens of it are obtained it is premature to hazard an opinion as to its specific validity. It differs in having a narrow frontal black band, much less

white on the tail, and the underparts of the body of a dull white. It has only one alar bar. The specimen in question was obtained by Dr. Maack in the valley of the Amoor.

In conclusion, there appears to be no doubt that all the above-mentioned species are descended from one parent stock, *Lanius excubitor* or *Lanius borealis*, probably the latter, as *L. excubitor* shows a tendency to cast back towards *L. borealis*. They may be treated either as permanent varieties or subspecies, or else as fairly good species though closely allied and to some extent connected by intermediate links. But in the present case, as the characteristics are fairly definable, I deem it expedient to adopt the last alternative.

I do not give any table of measurements, as I find on examination that they do not yield any practical result.

XXXII.—*Remarks on the Palearctic White-breasted Dippers.*

By H. E. DRESSER, F.L.S., F.Z.S.

TWENTY-FIVE years have elapsed since Mr. Salvin's excellent article on the genus *Cinclus* was published in this journal, and eighteen since I wrote the article on *Cinclus aquaticus* in the 'Birds of Europe' and gave a short review of its allies. It is also now more than ten years since vol. vi. of the British Museum 'Catalogue of Birds,' containing the *Cinclidæ*, was issued. During this period, as may well be imagined, much more information on the subject has been published and a much larger material for the discussion of the question is now available. I have lately been examining as large a series of Dippers as I could get together, and the result is that I have to some extent modified the views I held eighteen years ago. It may therefore be of interest to ornithologists if I place on record what further information I have been able to glean on the subject, and report progress up to date.

The Dipper is essentially a non-migratory species, and unless driven out by stress of weather does not appear at any time to wander far from its usual range, which is, as a rule, confined to mountainous districts and to places where there is